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K
Mr. Sheridan's Scheme of Education.

— *Fies de Rhetore Consul.*

JUV.

D U B L I N :

Printed in the Year M,DCC,LVIII.

LETTER

SCHOOLMASTER

IN THE

COUNTY



PRINTED IN TOWN

RELATIVE TO

Mr. Stowman's Scheme of Education.

—The Hon. Wm. Stowman, Junr.

DUBLIN:

Printed in the Year 1827.

LETTER

TO A

Schoolmaster in the Country,

FROM HIS

FRIEND in TOWN,

RELATIVE TO

Mr. *Sheridan's* Scheme of Education.

S I R,

YOU desire my Opinion concerning Mr. *Sheridan's* Scheme, and his Qualifications for undertaking so large a Province as that of directing the Studies, and finishing the Accomplishments of young Gentlemen, in the ornamental as well as useful Parts of Education.

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A whole

A whole Kingdom, you think, is a great Undertaking; that it is next to impossible he should have his Eye over all, to superintend, direct and reform what may be amiss; that he will find endless Reluctance in Schoolmasters to tread in any one's Steps, or follow any Line of Direction, but what they chalk out for themselves; with many other Objections; For an Answer to which I send you an Extract of his *Plan*, where they are all virtually, if not specifically, answered; and, I believe, will give you Satisfaction equal with mine when I read it.

The Scheme is, undoubtedly, laudable in Mr. *Sheridan*, and I make no Doubt but his Motives were so too, and think, with the honourable *Hibernian Society*, that it deserves publick Encouragement: But to give my Opinion as to the Success it may meet with, or the Benefit may accrue from it to the Public, is a Matter of more Consideration, and takes in more Circumstances, than I am able to make myself acquainted with, or could rightly decide on, if I knew them.

It is in all new Schemes, as in untried Roads, they may appear smooth in Prospect, though difficult to pass over; but where it is worth making the Trial, it should not discourage our setting out, that possibly a Bog may intercept us in one Place, or abrupt and steep Grounds in another;

if

if they be there, they are not unfurmountable, and, on Trial, may be found practicable at less Hazard and Labour than we imagine; and let the worst come that may, we shall have the same Comfort with Sir *Epicure Mammon*, who did not quite lose his Labour and Money in searching for the Philosopher's Stone, as he got something, by the Experiment, to cure the Itch.

Instead then of raising Objections to the Practicability of Mr. *Sheridan's* Scheme, which I think either idle or ill-natured, I will suppose it should succeed in all its Parts, and become so well established a Method, as to justify the Opinion and *Resolutions* entered into by the honourable Society, when the Plan was first laid before them, and signed by such of the *Nobility* and *Gentry*, as do Honour to the Undertaker, and whose bare Names should silence Gainfaying, and put an End to all sceptical Misgivings and Doubts.

To be methodical, as the Subject requires, we must consider, separately, the Advantages of having an *useful* and an *ornamental* Education, [for either may be had without the other] what additional Improvements may be expected from the Scheme, and what Reception the Gentlemen, so improved, are like to meet with, when they come abroad into the great World.

I begin

I begin with the last, for a Reason you will find presently, and shall take a View of the Benefit arising to the Public, from having young Gentlemen *finished*, i. e. furnished with such outward Accomplishments [the *Dehors*, I think, the *French* call it] as constitute, in common Acceptation, the pretty Gentleman, fine Gentleman, with other Appellatives, that, if they mean any thing, mean the same thing.

It has been observed, how justly I shan't pretend to say, that, with regard to the Address or Manners, they ought to be different in every different Rank of the World, and that, if good Sense be not wanting, they will imperceptibly follow, and become habitually suitable to our Condition, without taking Lessons from the different Masters, who, from Time to Time, advertise themselves for that Purpose; and again, that if good Sense be really wanting, Instruction will do but little, and the best Rules can be laid down, will be but like good Tools put into the Hand of a Workman who does not know how to use them; and in Conclusion, that Art is useless without Nature to direct it. I must beg leave to differ a little from this Opinion, and for this Reason, that we see a great deal of ill Manners in every Rank of the World; and yet it is equally certain, that good Sense is never wanting in any Rank or Condition whatever. In this last Point there are but
two

two Parties who have any Right to judge, (*viz.*) the young Man to be educated, and the Parents who are to give him Education: And tho' I have been diligent to look out, I could never find among high, or low, any one Instance of a young Man who was not sure, if he had but Opportunity, [and it is not all who are so modest as to think that wanting] he had Sense enough, and should surprize the World by his Accomplishments; nor any Instance of a Parent, who entertained the least Doubt of it; so I inevitably conclude, that good Manners and Address are the Work partly of Art, and that the best natural Sense sent into the World without it, will be as awkward as a Clown among Courtiers, a Pigeon among Rooks, or any other Conjunctions we daily see of plain Nature, and improved Nature, together.

It appears then to me, that having got a Spice of Mr. *Sheridan's artificial Nature* must be of singular Use to young Men before they come into the World, either of high or low Degree, though I so far allow the above Objection as to confess, that in the high Rank of young Men, they may be very well put out of Hand [as we ordinarily say of Work neatly done] following Mr. *Sheridan's Plan*; yet the compleating, the *finishing* the Gentleman, is only to be had by an after Commerce with the World, by conversing with Superiors as well as Equals, and, perhaps, with *Inferiors*,

rriors, that is, as Mr. *Fielding* words it, the *Wretches whom nobody knows*, but may be worth knowing, were it only that these future Ornaments of their Country may set the juster Value on themselves, when they observe the Difference between *high* and *low* Breeding, between formal Wretches who have squared their Manners by old-fashioned Rules, and their Language by Moods and Figures, and that genteel Manner so peculiar to those who have disengaged their Minds from Prejudices, and Thinking of all Sorts, and shew by a *vacant* Air, as well as Countenance and Speech, that they are not tinged with the Hue, or have contracted the Habits of the vulgar Herd of Mankind.

But for the Gentlemen of all under Classes, whose *Finishing* is in Question, and who are destined to Professions, I am clear in Opinion, that they should look no farther for Improvements from the great World; but that as soon as they get a Certificate or *Diploma*, signed by Mr. *T——*, of having taken the *Degree* of Gentlemen under Mr. *Sheridan*, they pass current in all Places and Companies for right *Proof*, in the same Manner that the *Tower Mark* warrants the true Standard without farther Experiment or Objection.

I have two Reasons for this last Opinion: The first is, that Experience proves the Attempt has always been fruitless, and Loss of Time; and if we look through the three Professions, it is obvious

vious to observe, that the *Divine*, the *Lawyer*, and the *graduated Physician*, are, on leaving their respective Academies, not only stored with all the Knowledge that falls within the Compass of Man's Comprehension, but also have so engrafted a Contempt for all Manners or Breeding, differing from their own, that, instead of copying what may be observed in the great World, they can only pity the poor People, who have not had the same Advantages with themselves, whereby to shine in Conversation, and delight at the same time they instruct us.

My second Reason is, that it is an *impossible* as well as unlikely Project; for could they be *dressed* so far, by Mr. *Sheridan* and his *Ushers*, as to have quite thrown off their old Coat, and totally laid aside the free Airs of the Collegian, the agreeable Raillery of the Templar, and the wise Deportment of the Doctor; yet it is not in Art to give them the Air and Turn of the *high Rank* People, as they want for a Ground-work, the Inanity of Thought, and unconnected Succession of Ideas, which make the specifick Difference between a Gentleman and a Pedant. The Rudiments of genteel Insensibility, must be taken in, as it were, with the Mother's Milk, improved by domestic Example, and confirmed by an early and frequent Resort to Dances, Drums, and Play-houses, with an obstinate Resolution to read nothing but Invitation-Cards, nor hear any Dis-

course but of Bets and Wagers: So that I cannot see how Gentlemen, used to Attention, can make any Progress in a Science, the Consummation of which is, to have no Attention to any thing.

How these Men of Profession would be received in the World, could they arrive at the Behaviour of fine Gentlemen, is hard to say, as we have no Experience in the Point, nor what Effect it would work on themselves to have learned the Looks, Gestures, and Phrases of their Betters; but a good deal may be guessed at from the Effects these acquired Airs have had on the other Sex, who have been instructed in the Fashions of Ladies of Condition, to fit them for seeing Company when they come up to Town.

I have met with many People old enough to remember the Time when *Tea-drinking* was first brought among us, and when a certain Set of *Schoolmistresses* travelled about the Country to teach young Ladies the Art of making Tea, and behaving themselves properly, during the Distribution of it, to a supposed Circle of Persons of Distinction, with the Questions and Replies suitable to the Occasion, [from which, by the way, I have been told *Swift* took the Hint of his *Polite Conversation*] and whatever else might express genteel Manners, and shew, in the Phrase of their

their *Mistresses*, what People were come of, and that they had a good Education. A lively forward *Miss* required but a Month to compleat her, if she was handsome; as indeed they all were, in the Opinion of the said *Mistresses*, as well as in that of their Fathers, Mothers and Nurses. *Miss* being thus *finished*, her Parents never were at Rest till they had her shewn in *Dublin*. It was pity such Accomplishments, in so lovely a Child, should be stified in a Country Corner of the World, and the Money thrown away and be lost; in consequence of which Reasoning, the whole Family was brought up to Town, and *Miss* exhibited, every Evening, to as many as could be got together at the Hour of Tea-drinking, where she gave entire Satisfaction to some, and was as much laughed at by others; which, however, was not the worst Consequence of her *finished* Education: She had her Head ever after so turned by the Contemplation of her own Perfections and Superiority of Accomplishments, that she could not relish the Company of such low Creatures as her Country Acquaintance were, who had never been in *Dublin*, nor made Tea for the *Quality*; was always in the Dumps, unmannerly to her Parents, disobliging to Neighbours, till *Art* and Politeness had made her as odious, as Nature had made her ugly.

That something like this would be the Case of the midling Gentry, were all to be shaped by Mr. *Sheridan*, and aim afterwards at a *fashionable Manner*, is very probable from what we daily may observe of plain, sensible, agreeable Companions, chearfully open, and naturally well-mannered, whilst they follow Nature, become insufferably affected, and despicably impertinent, after a Winter's Conversation among People of Fashion in Town, and so ashamed of the good Sense they had, as to study Folly for the rest of their Lives.

I think, therefore, we may pronounce, that this Part of Mr. *Sheridan's Finishing* should be left out of the Scheme, and the *ornamental* Part of his Education be confined to People in *high Life*; or, as the honourable Society chuses to express it, to the *Persons of high Rank and exalted Station* of this our most exalted Kingdom.

As to the *useful* we may expect to reap from Mr. *Sheridan's* Scheme, I should say a good deal; only I fear it might seem a Paradox to many People; however I will say something as well of his Design, as his Ability to execute it.

As to the first, I own myself one who has always been of Opinion, that we have too much,
rather

rather than too little, Learning among us. Be not startled, I beseech you, at the *wide-mouthed Paradox*, till you hear the Causes of my entertaining so foolish a Fancy : Therefore, to soften the Expression, I mean, we have too many *learned Men* among us, who are, by their Learning, superior to all Kinds of Industry ; who disdain mechanick Trades ; who, from having been *Servitors* at the College, when they ought to have been making *Brogues*, become Nuisances in every Conversation they are admitted to, Burdens on the Country Gentlemen, Medlers in Families, as their Learning entitles them to be, and either useless Vagabonds, or, as Col. A——l observes, *scandalous Curates* to indolent *Ministers*, who, instead of feeding their Country Flocks, are pampering themselves in Town.

Though I have as great an Esteem as Mr. *Sheridan* has, for our ever to be revered *Alma Mater* the College, and as high a Sense of the Worth of the Gentlemen who govern it, whom I think, *all in all*, not to be equalled by the Fellows of any other Society we know of ; yet it has always been one Cause of Consolation with me, when I saw her declining in Numbers of Students, that young Men may be more usefully employed in Commerce and Agriculture, than in getting, as most of them do no more, as much Knowledge of Sciences and Languages as serves to make them Coxcombs, when Nature,

as the *Poet* says, only meant them for Fools. Mr. *Sheridan* has assigned a Reason that will not bear, for this Deficiency of Numbers, (*viz.*) that our Gentry send their Sons to *Oxford* and *Cambridge* in great Numbers. How many are there now, I cannot say; but a very few Years ago, I spent a Week in each University, when there were but *two* from *Ireland* at *Oxford*, and not one, as I could hear of, at *Cambridge*; and twenty-five Years ago, the *Vice-chancellor* of *Dublin* College, who is, indeed, himself all Mr. *Sheridan* recommends to be attained, can testify there were not *thirty* at *Oxford*; and that too, I was informed, the highest Number ever known there from *Ireland*. The Truth is, Men of middling Estates send their Sons to Merchants, or assign them Farms, to the great Increase of this Kingdom, instead of [at a monstrous Expence, as Things now are] sending them to the College; whereby, if they do not miscarry, they may, possibly, get a bare Livelihood for what had been a Fund to raise them, with proportionable Industry, to large and unenvied Fortunes.

You may wonder at this, and recollect many wise Observations in which I may be included,
 “ That none but the Ignorant despise Learning;
 “ none but *Brutes* despise Politeness of Manners;
 “ that *ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes*, &c. has
 “ been a Maxim never controverted by any
 “ but

“ but untutored Savages.” Yes, true Learning, and true Manners, should be the first Object of every one’s Attention, who can devote himself to the first; and the second, of every Individual, however dignified, or undignified and undistinguished. But the Impression of the first cannot be made on every Kind of Wood, which is indiscriminately sent to Shop, be the Artificers as able Workmen as you can desire; nor is any *Politeness* necessary for, or becoming, the Bulk of Mankind, beyond the unconcealable Tribute of Regard that good Nature and good Sense will for ever shew, where it is due; without going to the Schools of Discipline where it is made up in the present fashionable Forms. There is a *false* and a *true* Breeding, or, rather, *Manners*. The first may be the Force of Nature; but the last was never got by Art. In *Courts*, ’tis true, there is an established artificial Breeding, which an *ingenious Nobleman* thinks necessary there, as, he says, without it, Men’s Passions would confound and destroy all; “ that “ if Men there did not embrace, they would “ stab;” which, though I think it were the better Fashion of the two, yet I am content it should be disused, and that great People should act the Hypocrite, and be every Thing but what they are; but for Under-People to be what they are not, will for ever render them the Scorn of all who have Sense, and [though they may not be able to tell why] the Detestation of the most stupid of their Acquaintance. It

It is not then to be half-learned, or half-bred, should be the Object of our Attention, nor should it be desired to have all Degrees of People any farther learned than may be necessary for their Trade or Calling. It may be justly affirmed they are neither the better or wiser for it; but, on the contrary, less capable of Instruction, and less amenable to the Laws of Society and Duty. As for those whose Professions require a good Degree of Learning, it seems to me they may attain to it on the Footing Things are, if they have equal Talents and Application; and if they want either, they will be but little forwarded by all the Refinements can be invented. The Truth is, we are too fond of *human* Learning, and have, in most Countries, since the Revival of it, pursued it to the Loss of Virtue and Religion. Reason was never more talked of, or less followed, than now among us; and all we seem to have got by Learning, and improving our Reason, is, that every Man's Kind of Learning is the most useful, and every Man's Reason the most demonstrably right, and a Standard to measure that of all others by.

But the two principal Advantages to be expected from the Academy are, being taught the *English* Language, which Dean *Swift* said, "if they did not teach in the College, they taught nothing;" and again, a Revival of the

the *antient Elocution*. It were to be wished the Dean had told Mr. *Sheridan*, at the same Time, in what Manner he would have the *English Tongue* taught, whether exclusively as a *radical Language*, or, as it really is, a Compound of all Languages ever used in Speech, unless the *Coptic* and *Chinese* may be excepted. The first seems impossible to have been his Meaning, as, in order to the right Use of Words, their Derivation must be known, and the precise *Idea* which, in their best and most cultivated State, they intended to convey. On this Knowledge, it may be affirmed, all just Speaking and fine Writing most essentially depend; so that the seven Years spent at Schools, if they do not bring this, bring no other Fruits of their Labour. It were to the full as ridiculous in a Teacher of Languages, to teach one Language abstracted from all others, as it was in *Moliere's* Professor, to ask one, who desired he would lend an Ear to a few Words he was about to speak, *which Ear* he should lend him? for, says the Professor, if you intend to speak *Hebrew, Arabic, Coptic, Greek, or Latin*, you must speak to this Ear; if plain *French*, come on the other Side; I reserve the *right Ear* for the learned Languages only. They are to go Hand in Hand; if they were separated, all Ideas would be indistinct and confounded, and even Spelling lost; which some Gentlemen, more ingenious than discreet, are helping on, by drop-

ing several *Letters* that ought to remain, though they be not founded, in order to shew the Derivation, and, consequently, in what Sense the Words should be used. All the Dean can be supposed to have meant, is, that Care should be had to teach, *which*, out of *many synonymous Words*, was the best to be used. And this, it must be owned, is wanting.

As to Mr. *Sheridan's* Abilities for this Undertaking, I am, if possible, a less competent Judge than in any thing you have else proposed to me. I have not the least Knowledge of the Gentleman, but what I have learn'd from his general Character, and some of his Writings which I have perus'd; but am glad of an Opportunity to do him the Justice he desires, and I believe [if I may trust the Professions he makes] do him a great Pleasure too, when I declare, that I think him much happier in the *first* than in the *last*. His Character, as represented to me, an utter Stranger to him, is something beyond superlative; and his Works, I will be bold enough to say, below Mediocrity. His Words unprecise, his Periods unharmonious, his Sentiments not growing progressively, but starting from nothing, to the Appearance of something new and surprizing; but the Surprise ceases, when the Reader recollects he had seen them before, where they were in better Place. Perhaps I have seen only the least *finis'd* of his Performances,

Performances, which, except some flighty Scraps in News-papers, were no more than *The Conduct of the Manager*, and *An Oration pronounced*, &c. and it may be injurious to form an Opinion only from these, when, for aught I know, he may have obliged the World with some *Chef d'oeuvre*, or Masterpiece of Genius, and elegant Composition. I think it improbable; but however it be, it is no Proof of his Incapacity for the Place he pretends to, nor any Reflexion on the Part of his Character he values most [a Lover of Virtue, and a Friend to Mankind] that he wants the Genius, or *Vis insita*, which alone distinguishes a *Writer* from a *Compiler*. There are very worthy, honest Gentlemen, who cannot write, and yet serviceable to their Country; and may, like the *French Princes of the Blood*, keep others to write for them; not to mention the Possibility of their being good *Directors* how others should write. When Mr. Addison was at *Paris*, the *premier* Dancing-master there had but one Leg; yet all the *Noblesse*, and growing Hopes of the Nation, were his Scholars. What hinders then but Mr. Sheridan may teach *Eloquence*, though he be not eloquent himself? We are apt to make Distinctions where there is no Occasion, and to lump our Ideas when they ought to be most separated. *Eloquence* and *Rhetorick* pass for the same thing, in general Apprehension; and yet one consists in giving Rules, the other in practising them.

Quintilian was the best *Rhetorician* in *Rome*, and yet a very paltry Declaimer; if, indeed, the Declamations be his; but whether they are or no, he had no Reputation for Eloquence in his own Time.

For the other, the *Revival* of the *antient Elocution*, I must premise that, I hope, it will never be received among us. Let any one who has seen *Henly*, or some dignified Divines, I shan't name, varying Gestures and Looks, sawing the Air, and all the while saying nothing, pronounce on the Propriety or Usefulness, could it be attained, of having *Elocution* restored. But it is impossible, as our Manners, and what is called *Taste*, are totally against it. In *France* there is a good deal of it; in *Italy* more; but then the Manners of both Nations make it suitable and proper, and, in each, every one, even in common Discourse, is an Actor; and the grave *Italian* outdoes, in Gesture, the lively *Frenchman*. You may object, that though *Elocution*, with bad Sense, is ridiculous, yet it graces sensible Orations. Be it so; but who is to judge of the Sense, or how many sensible Compositions are produced among us? Here's another Difficulty in the Way; and every Preacher and Pleader [I suppose it not necessary for the Physician] must be tied to the disagreeable Necessity of having both *Sense* and *Elocution*; whereas,

whereas, on our present Footing, God be thanked, we do pretty well without either.

If the Society, however, will have it, I propose reviving, along with *Elocution*, the *Roman* Practice of one *secretly* placed, reading his Composition to the Assembly, and another, in view, going along with the Reader in the *elocution* Part, with proper Gestures; and then, I think, fifty Masters of *Elocution* may do for the whole Kingdom; ten for *Dublin*, and forty for the rest of it, which, on a large Allowance, will out-number every sensible weekly Composition in the Kingdom; and these Gentlemen may be sent for, on Occasion, to accompany the Reader. Here then, I think Mr. *Sheridan* may be useful; and for the last Solution you require of me, why so many very considerable Persons espouse Mr. *Sheridan*, and so warmly contend for his Plan, if there be not a good Degree of Certainty, that it will be *useful* to have it executed? I can give no clear Answer; but to form a Guess, I should think it proceeds from a just Sense and Resentment of their having been so ill tutored themselves, that a Reformation in the Point is become, in their Opinion, absolutely necessary, if we expect the rising Generation should be better than their Fathers, and not worse. There is a Chance both Ways; but I have Hopes they

they will be better, and should be pretty sure of it, if another *Academy* were set up for them not to *learn* any thing at all, but to *unlearn* every thing they had been taught at home, either by Precept or Example, except doing nothing, that so they might be committed to Mr. *Sheridan*, as it were, a *Tabula rasa*, and save him the Trouble of taking the *Yan* out of them, which must be first done, before the Odour he means to embue them with, can take to the Cask, or be effectually impregnated.

But I have written too long a Letter. If the Defence I have attempted, in Behalf of Mr. *Sheridan*, be agreeable to your Sentiments, I have my End, as I am in Hopes all other Schoolmasters may, by better Arguments, which, no doubt, will be offered by the Society, be brought to acquiesce in the Scheme, and, for the Good of their Country, be content, all, to lay down the *Ferule*, and betake themselves to some honester Course, and more serviceable to Learning, than that of making Scholars; for more serviceable that it will be, is demonstrable from an uncontroverted Position laid down by very eminent Men, “ That if we had
 “ fewer Books, we should have more true
 “ Learning:” And it is not to be denied, that if we had fewer Scholars, we should have fewer Books; and equally certain, that if we had
 fewer

fewer Teachers, we should have fewer Scholars :
 All which, I hope, we shall live to see accom-
 plished by means of this Academy, and that
 other I have made bold to recommend to you,
 and, if you think fit, to the *Hibernian Society* ;
 which, if it succeeds, will produce the Refor-
 mation long looked for in vain : And it will be
 our Glory, and not our Reproach, to have it
 said literally, *Totus Mundus agit Histrionem.*

I am, &c.

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Just Published,
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A FULL
VINDICATION

OF
THOMAS SHERIDAN, Esq;
BEING AN
ANSWER

To a scurrilous
PAMPHLET

INTITULED,
“The CASE of the STAGE.”

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